


THE  
RESURRECTION BODY

*"According to the Scriptures"*

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WILBERT W. WHITE



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*Thirty Studies in Old  
Testament Characters*

*Thirty Studies in Minor  
Prophets*

*Thirty Studies in Gospel  
by John*



# THE RESURRECTION BODY

*"According to the Scriptures"*

BY

WILBERT W. WHITE

PRESIDENT, THE BIBLICAL SEMINARY IN  
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*We have actually touched the borderland where matter and energy seem to merge into one another—the shadowy realm between the known and the unknown. I venture to think the greatest scientific problems of the future will find their solution in this borderland, and even beyond. Here, it seems to me, lie ultimate realities—subtle, far reaching, wonderful.*

—SIR WILLIAM CROOKES.

*To understand the new physics rightly requires almost a new set of brain cells. . . . We are dealing with what is to us well-nigh the infinitely great, associated with the infinitely little, and we are forced, in carrying forward our train of thought, to drive a-team ideas never before yoked together.*

—CHARLES KASSEL in *Immortality and the New Physics*, "North American Review," October, 1922.



## FOREWORD

Rufus Choate is reported to have said of John Quincy Adams that he always had an unerring instinct for the jugular vein. By this, of course, he meant that Mr. Adams went directly to the vital part of any matter. In attack, presumably, he would leap for the vulnerable spot. It was an unerring instinct for the jugular vein which led Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West years ago to agree that if they could explain satisfactorily on naturalistic grounds the resurrection of Jesus and the conversion of Paul, they would be able to prove the whole system of Christian belief to be without substantial foundation. This they attempted to do. The result was that the one wrote a valiant defence of the fact of the resurrection, while the other published an equally strong argument for the reality of the conversion of Paul.

The pivotal relation of the resurrection to the Christian system has been generally acknowledged. It is the cardinal fact of Chris-

tianity. Everything hinges on it. Strauss, one of the great leaders of modern unbelief, declares the resurrection to be the "centre of the centre, the real heart of Christianity as it has been until now." The Elder Delitzsch in his commentary on Genesis says that, while it is true that the present upheaval in the field of criticism is well calculated to perplex the conscience and entangle weak faith in all manner of anxiety, if, however, in this labyrinth there remain for us this one assurance, CHRISTUS VERE RESURREXIT (Christ was truly raised from the dead), we shall possess the Ariadne-thread to guide us out of it.

Dr. David Cairns says: "In belief in the resurrection is the spring of that new life of faith of which to-day the Church stands so much in need."

This comment by Dr. Cairns, discovered after the manuscript of this little volume was about completed, summarizes the conviction of the author, who is not without earnest expectation that multitudes, in the near future, through prayerful perusal of the source books of Christianity, will come to believe in their hearts that God raised Jesus Christ from the



dead, and in consequence will exhibit lives that shall reveal Him in resurrection power.

In this study, effort has been made to be true to facts rather than to present a harmonized theory and full explanation. We stand with Swete of Cambridge, who discerningly says that the narration of exceptional events is likely to present parts which do not fit. That they do not fit may be evidence that the non-fitting factors were really seen. And if, on a deeper examination of such events, it is found that the peculiarities exhibit one underlying law, the natural inference is that the narratives are true.

We desire to be understood as fully and heartily in sympathy with all scientific investigation and advance of knowledge. Of some of the new knowledge we are not by any means sure. We are compelled sometimes to substitute for the words, "Every scholar knows," these more conservative ones, "Some scholars think." Our conception of Biblical truth leads us to rejoice in every new real discovery and in every assured result of experiment. We do not believe that religion and science are enemies. There must be something wrong either

with my science or your religion if they are not true friends.

As for evolution—there are many kinds of evolution. The word calls for definition. Let those who dispute be sure they understand each other's terms. We have not the slightest fear that the teaching of the Bible, respecting Jesus Christ in general and concerning His resurrection in particular, is inconsistent with the true findings of science. So we are not afraid of science. In these days of undreamed of marvels, with the knowledge of man yet conspicuous for its limits, who will venture denial of the mystery of the resurrection as presented in Holy Scripture?

The message of the following pages is addressed particularly to those who are in perplexity about their faith, and to those who sorrow because of the vanished hand. May Easter be a season in which with reverent fear and great joy we shall turn from the tomb to Him who is the resurrection and the life. "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead."

W. W. W.

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Chapter I: With What Body Do  
They Come?

*The attitude of science toward the notion of a supersensual universe, or series of universes, interacting with the material fabric we know—a concept fundamental to any logical theory of immortality—has ceased to be the hostile or indifferent one it was. On the contrary, it might almost seem that the theory of a universe of finer and infinitely more potent substance is almost ready to be announced by our scientific thinkers as an inevitable conclusion from recent discoveries.*

—CHARLES KASSEL in *Immortality and the New Physics*, "North American Review," October, 1922.



## Chapter I: With What Body Do They Come?

“The body of the resurrection is nothing other than God’s volitional repetition of the body of the grave—*with splendid additions.*” Thus affirms Professor Olin Curtis, in *The Christian Faith*, where may be found a very remarkable discussion of the mystery of the resurrection body.

We should ever keep in mind that the distinctive teaching of Christianity about the future is not that the soul is immortal. Paganism teaches that. It is, that there is the resurrection of the body. We are to be human beings in the world to come. A disembodied spirit is not a complete human being. A human being consists of an embodied spirit. The body of the future will be the resurrection body. “The new man in Christ is made complete only by the resurrection body.”

Let us be clear in our thinking about the word resurrection. Reanimation is not resur-

rection. Reanimation, which is the same as resuscitation, means bringing back to life. Resurrection is more than this. It involves newness of life. It means reunion of spirit and body. It means more than reunion of spirit with the old body. It means reunion of spirit with a new and different body, yet a body which is the particular person's own body under the law of identity; a body which can be traced back to its conditioning clue, namely, the body which was that one person's during life. So, while it is true that the body of the resurrection is a different body, it is also equally true that it is the same body. This is one of the several paradoxes of the Christian faith.

The Scriptures furnish a perfect illustration of what we are saying. Lazarus was reanimated. Jesus was resurrected. The stone was required to be rolled away to permit Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Jesus did not require the stone to be rolled away in order that He might come forth. The angel rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb to let the outsiders in, not to let Jesus out. In that tomb were evidences of the resurrection which it was desirable the disciples should see. The wind-

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ing sheets spoke as eloquently and convincingly of entrance into new life, as the empty shell of the chrysalis speaks of the flight of the butterfly. Lazarus brought with him out of the tomb the wrappings of the grave that were about him. Jesus came forth from the tomb without the winding sheets of death. He did not need to be loosed and let go. He was the Prince of Life. It was impossible that He should be holden of death. What of the ceremonies provided by Joseph of Arimathæa, and the one hundred pounds of spices brought by Nicodemus? Concerning them, more later in exposition of John 20: 1-10, but a brief word is called for here. The usual interpretation, to the effect that our Lord Himself with deliberation unwrapped the grave cloths from His body and placed them in carefully arranged order on the stone shelf where His body had been resting, and then folded "the napkin that was upon his head," laying it in a place by itself, is unscriptural. The resurrection body became such within the winding sheets. At the word of God, who raised Him from the dead (Acts 2: 24; Ephesians 1: 20), He sprang in His new, powerful, spiritual body out of the wrap-

pings, thus evidencing Him to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4). He left them intact, except for the head-roll which, when released, naturally fell back to a place by itself; and then on through the walls of the sealed tomb He proceeded into the free atmosphere of that first Easter morning.

The question which we all ask, With what body will our departed come? we believe should be answered in terms which provide reply to this other question, namely, With what body did Jesus come from the grave? He is the first fruits. We shall be like Him when it is manifest what we shall be. Following as faithfully as possible this clue, we are clear already that the resurrection body is not the body reanimated. It is not a mere return to life in the same corruptible, weak, fleshly, natural body of the grave. His Easter body was not the natural body of the grave. Ours will not be. Paul makes this very clear in his great chapter on the resurrection—I Corinthians, fifteenth. He tells us that we sow not the body that shall be, when we sow wheat or oats or barley. But we sow bare grain, and in the strange, mysterious new life which succeeds death, God

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gives it a body as it pleases Him, to each seed its own body.

In the chapter to which reference has just been made the great Apostle recognizes the fact that a true and complete human being is an *embodied* spirit, not a disembodied spirit. He answers the question, With what body do they come? The answer is: God gives it a body, a suitable body. It will be a body perfectly adapted to the new order of nature in which it is to live. It will be an incorruptible body. It will be a body conformed to the body of His glory (Philippians 3:21). It will be a powerful body. It will be a spiritual body, whatever that means, but it will be a body. A spiritual body means a body adapted to the spiritual existence into which entrance is gained by the resurrection. Perhaps light is thrown on the meaning of the word "spiritual" by expressions found later in the chapter: "Now I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of God. . . . We shall all be changed. . . . The dead shall be raised incorruptible. . . . This mortal must put on immortality." The word "spiritual" is a modifier of body, so that there is a body in-

volved. Disembodiment is furthest from the Apostle's mind. Westcott challengingly interprets thus: "When the laws of our existence are hereafter modified, then we, because we are unchanged, shall find some other expression, truly the *same* in relation to that new order, because it is not the same as that to which it corresponds in this."

It should also be observed that this masterly discussion of the resurrection by St. Paul recognizes the stability of nature under the God of this mysterious universe in which we live, in that each order of life remains in its category. "To each seed a body of its own. . . . There is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts. . . . There are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial." It is made clear that in the life to come human beings will continue to be such. They will not pass into creatures of different orders either below or above them. The use of this portion of Scripture with those who profess to believe in transmigration of souls has been found interesting.

The thoughtful reader will perhaps be stimulated to re-examine the Bible, especially the New Testament, for its emphasis of the value



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of the body and the duty of paying it all due respect as well as of giving it all due care. It was under the influence of this teaching that a great theologian and Christian pastor, as he followed the bier of an only son, spake kindly to the bearers, saying, "Tread softly, young men, you carry a temple of the Holy Ghost."

It was doubtless the same consideration for the body that prompted Archbishop Whately, when some one quoted the King James Version of Philippians 3: 21 in his hearing, using the expression, "who shall change our vile body," to seize the book and render it as the Greek demands: "We wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew *the body of our humiliation*, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Christianity honors the body. It recognizes it as a place where the great God desires to dwell. It has been supremely honored by the incarnation of the Son of God. Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also

highly exalted Him. To His servants it is given to be like Him and with Him in glory. "St. Paul's expression of Christian hope," says Chancellor Bernard, "is not deliverance from the body, but redemption of the body. The redemption of the body is the last stage in the great process of adoption (*υιοθεσίας*) by which we are made 'sons of God.' " Who should not bow in humble and thankful adoration for the high calling to which mankind has thus been summoned?

## Chapter II: How Are the Dead Raised?

*Who knows how it is that the mind, as we are familiar with it, moves at its will the fingers of the hand? This—our familiarity with the phenomenon aside—is a veritable miracle. We are as ignorant of its final cause as we are of the primary cause of electricity, or as we are ignorant of gravitation in its first cause, or of heat, or light, or even of the thing that makes a seed grow. These things are, despite our inability to understand them, and it is no strain upon the reason to suppose that the like may be true with bodies of ether, or of some higher, more transcendent substance which surpasses the ether in its properties and uses it as we use the electric and magnetic forces that lie in nature.*

—CHARLES KASSEL in *Immortality and the New Physics*, "North American Review," October, 1922.

## Chapter II: How Are the Dead Raised?

There is no better brief comprehensive reply to this question than that given by St. Paul (I Corinthians, fifteenth chapter): "God giveth a body as it pleaseth him." In further answer to the questions: How are the dead raised? and, With what body do they come? I adopt and employ the statement of Dr. Olin Curtis as the best of those I know. It is as follows:

Negatively speaking, God, in the resurrection of the dead, does not produce the new body by the development of an indestructible *germ* which is within the body of this life. Nor does He produce it by a *natural force* which in some way belongs to the body of this life. Neither is the body to be an *ethereal* body which before or at the time of death was within the physical body as the kernel is within the husk of a nut. It is not the literal body of the grave reconstructed, whether by using all, or many,

or a few or even one, of the old material atoms. All this chasing through the universe to get the identical particles of matter, or enough of them to constitute a "proper identity," is not only an absurdity in philosophy, but a serious misinterpretation of St. Paul. Further, it is not the result of any natural law, any habitual divine volition, such as brings the buds and blossoms of spring.

Speaking positively, the body of the resurrection *is* a purely spiritual body (not bound by the laws of this world); made by the direct and new intention of God; but so made as to be conditioned by the body of the grave. Every glorified body is in occasional connection with a single physical body just as really as my body to-day is in occasional connection with the body of my childhood. The child's body conditions the man's body—is the start, the initial indicative, the determining fundament, in God's own process of identity. The body I have now is what it is because the body of my childhood was what it was. I have lost every old particle of matter, times and times, but I have remained in my own category of identity. Not for an instant has my body



leaped into another man's category. Precisely so, a man's body of glory is his own body under the law of identity, and can be traced back to its conditioning clue, namely, the body which that one man had at the time of death. Every abiding element, the entire intrinsic plan and meaning of the material body, is by the resurrection brought again into fact and made glorious. Indeed, were it feasible to enter into a thorough philosophical discussion to show what matter actually is, such a discussion would, I believe, make it evident that the body of the resurrection is nothing other than God's volitional repetition of the body of the grave—*with splendid additions.*



## Chapter III: Why Is the Resurrection Judged Incredible?

*If we suppose Intelligence, with an organism answering in its characteristics merely to the properties of the ether, we have a being conforming very nearly, if not quite, to the notion the mystics had of the inditeillers of the supersensual world. With bodies more dense than steel, though unamenable to earthly sight or touch, these creatures would see the fleshly forms as a shadowy garment, and matter at large but as a film thinner than air which offered no bar to their passage. And, exempt from the laws of gravitation which hold prison bound the frame of clay, they might levitate at will, and with the swiftness of light transport themselves from planet to planet. From the sun's flame they could take no harm and even the chill of absolute zero would leave their bodies unscathed.*

—CHARLES KASSEL in *Immortality and the New Physics*, "North American Review," October, 1922.

## Chapter III: Why Is the Resurrection Judged Incredible?

This question of St. Paul addressed to King Agrippa (Acts 26: 8) may well be employed to include a brief, partial statement both of explanations of rejection of the Easter message and of reasons for acceptance of it as true.

Why do some disbelieve the Easter message of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus as Lord of death and the grave?

One reason is because, as in the days of our Lord, there are those who have adopted a world view which does not permit the belief. The sect of the Sadducees denied the resurrection. They went further. "The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23: 8. "On that day there came to him Sadducees, they that say there is no resurrection" (Matthew 22: 23).

Paul addressed the representative of another type of present-day unbeliever in the res-

urrection when to King Agrippa he said (Acts 26), "Why is it judged incredible with you, if God should raise the dead?" This class is living luxuriously and is careless of the future. Attention to affairs of the spirit is not popular in its circle. Its members smile superciliously at efforts of serious-minded believers to bring them face to face with reality. Paul in his great chapter on the resurrection (1 Corinthians, fifteenth) intimates that with some at Corinth evil companionships were the explanation of doubt about the resurrection. He reviews the evidence for the resurrection of our Lord, and then proceeds to indicate inconsistency on the part of certain members of the Corinthian Church ("some among you") in believing that our Lord rose, while at the same time doubting the possibility of resurrection of their own beloved dead. It would seem that these people were faced by indisputable evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, and at the same time were living such untrue lives as to be unsettled about the resurrection of their own dead! He earnestly warns them not to be deceived. "Evil communications," says he, "corrupt good manners."

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The influence of great names coupled with faulty exegesis of Scripture is a powerful influence with the average person in the direction of practical denial of the resurrection, and consequent abandon to the free and easy life referred to by Paul when he says: "If we are found false witnesses . . . let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Professor Harnack in *What Is Christianity?* declares that the New Testament itself distinguishes between the Easter message of the empty grave and the appearance of Jesus on the one side, and the Easter faith on the other. By the Easter faith he means that Jesus is alive, but the tomb was not opened, nor did Jesus appear "according to the Scriptures." He asserts that, although the greatest value is attached in the Scripture to that message, we are to hold the Easter faith even in its absence. In support, he tells us that the story of Thomas is given for the exclusive purpose of impressing us that we must hold the Easter faith even without the Easter message. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." He further says that the disciples on the road to Emmaus were blamed for not believing, even though the

Easter message had not yet reached them.

Is Professor Harnack a safe exegete of Scripture in these instances? Let us see. Is it not true (see John, twentieth chapter) that Thomas had already been given the Easter message by his fellow-disciples? They had told him that they had seen the Lord. He had already rejected the Easter message at the mouth of trustworthy friends and consequently was without the Easter faith. The Lord's address to Thomas was substantially as follows, when we take into account the context: Thomas, you declined to accept the Easter message (the message of the empty tomb and of My appearances hitherto) as true on the word of your fellow-disciples. Blessed are those who do not reject this message of theirs, as you have done. While in this special instance I have met your demand for sight and touch, the method for the time to come will be that of belief of the message on testimony. I shall not make it a rule to appear in bodily form as I have done to you. The message of My rising from the dead will be carried by you and your fellow disciples who have seen Me. By that message the Easter faith will be created. On that message the



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Easter faith will rest. Your own testimony on this particular occasion will be recorded and read by multitudes in all parts of the world. It will be a great aid to their faith. It will even be the means of creating the Easter faith in many. It is for this reason that I have appeared to you. These things will be written that people everywhere in days to come may believe that I am the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they may have life in My name.

Turning to Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter, the thoughtful reader will there also take issue with Professor Harnack's exegesis. He says that "the two were blamed for not believing in the resurrection even though the Easter message had not yet reached them." The fact is that Jesus did not blame them for this at all. He expressed surprise at their failure to grasp the Easter message in view of its presence in the Prophets. His words are: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe [the Easter message] after all that the prophets have spoken! And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

Moreover they had already received the message. They spoke to Him of certain persons who had reported that the tomb was empty and that Jesus was alive.

Surely Professor Harnack's exegesis of the parts of the Gospels by Luke and John given above, does not conform to the canon of interpretation laid down by Bengel when he says: "An expositor should be like the maker of a well, who puts no water into the source himself, but makes it his object to let the water flow without diversion, stoppage or defilement." We fain would ask Professor Harnack, in all earnestness, what he means by the Easter faith. He describes it in the words, "Jesus is alive." In what sense is Jesus alive? Is it in the same sense in which Abraham is alive, or Paul, or Luther? If Jesus is not alive according to the Easter message, of what special value to me is the faith that He is alive.

Note in passing, the manner in which this twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke puts Jesus into the Old Testament, including specifically His death, His resurrection on the third day, and the preaching of repentance and remission of sins in His name unto all the nations. The

Old Testament is not brought into evidence in present-day apologetics as it deserves to be used. If we are not greatly mistaken, it will be coming back to its own soon.

How comes it to pass that honored leaders have gone to such lengths in their thinking as seriously to consider, and publicly to advocate, such a severance as that of the Easter faith from the Easter message? The explanation is believed to be found in the words of Henry Robert Reynolds in the Introduction to his book on John the Baptist, where he says: "If in deference to the *Zeitgeist*, our religious leaders should recklessly surrender every position which is speciously assailed, in forgetfulness that the assault has been successfully repelled by those who have not lost heart, the cause of Christ will be for a period dishonoured, and a time of deep discouragement will prevail."

The *spirit of the times* has already stampeded not a few into compromise with what they believe to be the demands of science. This has resulted in a surrender of positions supported by valid evidence and sound reasoning. However there are many who have not lost

faith nor have they lost heart. These trust that in the days to come (may we not hope soon) the critical spirit will be replaced by the judicial temper, and that the scientific method will be employed wholly and not partially as is so often the case at present. Indeed already there are even among those who have caught and slain the nightingale, certain discerning spirits who have begun to lament the silence of the forest. We cannot have the Easter faith once the Easter message is gone. There is even now widespread evidence of the absence of the faith where the message has been rejected. The average man is usually consistent in his thinking.

Why do so many doubt or wholly reject the Easter message? This question is partly answered, I repeat, because the scientific method is not faithfully, persistently, and patiently employed in the matter. We need here not only to carry on. We need to *carry through*. Defining the scientific method in somewhat different terms from those already suggested (see Inductive Method in dictionary), we may say that it consists of exact observation, correct interpretation, rational explanation, and

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reasonable construction. We ought to add also, obedient application. Neptune is the outermost known planet of the solar system. It requires 164 years to make its journey around the sun! Its distance is 2,760,000,000 miles from the sun! It was discovered September 23, 1846, by Galle of Berlin. The discovery was made as the result of calculations by Leverrier. Adams, an English astronomer, had previously made calculations which indicated the same result. *Neptune was located before discovered.* Neptune was located by the Inductive Method, which is another way of saying, by the Scientific Method. An effect was observed and an adequate cause for it was sought. The opinion is confidently ventured that if in the study of the resurrection men would observe, interpret, explain, construct, and obey as faithfully as was done in locating and discovering the planet Neptune, they would find that the Easter faith, according to the Scriptures, is inseparable from the Easter message.

A question is in place here. Why, since the resurrection is such a transcendently important fact, if a fact, is it not so indisputably evidenced as to preclude all possibility of doubt

on the part of anybody? We are sobered in our thinking by the consideration that were such the case, the moral as well as the intellectual significance of Christianity would be impaired. The programme of Christianity calls for belief on evidence rather than on explanation. This is the method of science. To chosen witnesses, and not to all the people, the Saviour appeared after His passion. He appointed a campaign of testimony for the days ahead. This is clear from His words to Thomas: "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." The next verses (John 20: 30, 31) indicate the method by which belief is to be secured: "These things are written that ye may believe."

Christianity certainly involves the development of the whole of man. Its method is essentially scientific. Schiller of Oxford is right when he declares the identity of method in science and religion to be far more fundamental than the differences. Both call for action on probability, even on possibility. Both require experimentation. Both lead to certain knowledge through obedience to law. It is quite generally believed that a large element in



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true education consists of *ability to weigh evidence*. The scientific method calls for exact observation, correct description, and just valuation. This method would be uncalled for if the resurrection of Christ were so attested that nobody could possibly doubt the fact. There is profound wisdom in what is involved in the words of the prophet (Isaiah 45: 15): "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." There is supreme challenge to the intellectual and moral possibilities of mankind in Christianity's method of approach to the race. Latham in *Pastor Pastorum* says: "If our Lord's resurrection had been so attested that no sane person could doubt of the fact; if he had appeared in public and appalled Pilate on his judgment seat or Herod on his throne, then, strange as it may appear, by the very fact of historic certainty being well established, the moral significance of the resurrection would be impaired. For, the acceptance of it would be independent of that which I have so often said is essential to religious belief, the concurrence of the free human will."





## Chapter IV: Why Is the Resurrection Judged Credible?

*Although at first sight, the idea that we are immersed in a medium almost infinitely denser than lead might seem inconceivable, it is not so if we remember that in all probability matter is composed mainly of holes. We may in fact regard matter as possessing a bird-cage kind of structure, in which the volume of ether disturbed by the wires when the structure is moved is infinitesimal in comparison with the volume enclosed by them. If we do this there is no difficulty from the great density of the ether; all that we have to do is to increase the distance between the wires in proportion as we increase the density of the ether.*

—PROF. J. J. THOMPSON.

## Chapter IV: Why is the Resurrection Judged Credible?

We return to ask a second time the question put to King Agrippa by Paul: "Why is it judged incredible with you, if God should raise the dead?" The absence of good reason for unbelief is here clearly intimated. The grounds for acceptance of the resurrection of Jesus as a fact and appropriate action in the light of the fact are suggested by Paul to be most substantial.

Almost without realizing it we are face to face with one of the most outstanding and compelling reasons for belief in the Easter message. It is this, that Paul the Apostle believed it. On it he rested his Easter faith. Can there be any doubt about his conception of the relation of the Easter message and the Easter faith to each other? Verify, if you will, by restudy of the four great letters of his concerning which the boldest criticism has not

even suggested doubt; viz.: The letters to the Corinthians, and the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans. Remember as you do this that these letters all were written less than thirty years after the death of Jesus to companies of Christians living in the three distinct and distinctive regions bordering on the north of the Great Sea, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. Remember also that they were written by a man who formerly had most bitterly opposed both the message and the faith of Easter.

It will be helpful to clarity of thought and consequent fairness of judgment to be keeping in mind Professor Harnack's position as we proceed. This position represents the most up-to-date, the only and final, stand which can be taken by those who reject the Pauline teaching concerning the resurrection. Professor Harnack's belief, we repeat, is that the Easter message, which consists of the empty grave and the appearances of Jesus in His resurrection body, must be distinguished from the Easter faith. The message, he affirms, we can no longer hold. Without it, however, he maintains that we must hold the faith, which is that Jesus is

alive. In the words of another, Professor Harnack's position is adopted thus: "I don't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus.—Jesus alive? Yes. But I just can't believe in the bodily resurrection."

It is thus clearly seen that the Modernist boldly rejects the documentary evidence. We frankly accept it, not blindly, but with fairly complete knowledge of the situation. Instead of accepting the statement of the Modernist to the effect that "every scholar knows" his (the Modernist's) position to be true, we are able to go only so far as to affirm that "some scholars think" the Modernist position true. It should not be forgotten for a moment that the rejection of the evidence is made on critical and not on judicial grounds. The documents already referred to (the letters to the Corinthians, the Romans and the Galatians), as well as the remainder of the New Testament are received in courts of civilization as reliable and trustworthy testimony. The judges of the earth have not considered themselves justified in proceeding as far as the critics of the Church.

We fain would pause to ask in all candor

which "on the face of it" is the more reasonable, the Biblical position, or that of Professor Harnack. The Biblical records proceed upon the basis that the Easter message and the Easter faith belong together. The every-day, common, and usually safe judgment of mankind, we believe, will continue to think that the Easter faith cannot exist without the Easter message, any more than a house can stand without a support of some kind under it, or that a tree can bear fruit without roots. How can a tree be a tree at all, without its underground counterpart?

The organizing centre of our answer to the question, Why accept the Easter message? is the fact that the first generation of Christians believed it. This fact of belief on the part of the Apostolic group and the first century Christians we are confident can be adequately accounted for only on the basis of the resurrection as a fact.

Leading up to this answer in somewhat fuller form, let us closely examine selected representative portions of the Biblical record that we may grasp clearly its own way of conveying the Easter message.

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### THE EMPTY TOMB IN THE GOSPEL BY JOHN

The empty tomb is in evidence in each of the four Gospels. The account, most challenging, and offering opportunity for direct, intensive, first-hand, psychological testing by any reader, is found in the first ten verses of the twentieth chapter of St. John. That this record can be a fabrication is to me unthinkable. Please follow in the study of it and judge for yourself.

The account reads as follows (see John 20: 1-10):

“Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb. She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in. Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beheld the

linen cloths lying, and the napkin that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again unto their own home."

Observe carefully as we proceed and use your historical imagination freely in order to picture the scene accurately in all its details.

1. The tomb is the centre of attention in the account. Note, "unto the tomb," "from the tomb," "out of the tomb," "toward the tomb," "to the tomb," "into the tomb," "to the tomb."

In this new tomb the body of Jesus had been placed. A great stone had been rolled against the door. Upon the stone had been put the seal of the Roman Empire. Watchers had been on guard to keep the tomb from being disturbed.

2. This tomb is approached by three different people, Mary Magdalene, Peter, and "the other disciple whom Jesus loved." Mary came to it (presumably walking). From it she went *running*. The other two *came* running. For awhile after they started they ran together.



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One of them, the younger, running faster than the other, reached the tomb first.

3. The reason why Mary ran from the tomb to which she came walking, was because she saw something which led her to jump to an exciting conclusion. What she saw was that the tomb was open. The stone which had been rolled against the door of the tomb had been taken away. "She saw the stone taken away." The inference was that somebody had taken away the body of Jesus. In this she was mistaken, but as fast as her feet could carry her, she went to the disciples and told them what she believed, namely, that the body of Jesus had been removed from the tomb. Imagine the excitement with which she informed these men, and the promptness with which they must have started toward the tomb. The account gives me the impression that they became more eager as they proceeded, and if possible ran faster and faster. One was younger than the other and consequently could run faster. He reached the tomb first, but was not the first to enter. There is psychology here which fits perfectly the collection of records concerning the events and persons involved.

4. "The other disciple" is the second one in the account who is said to have seen something. Mary was the first. She saw *from without* the tomb the stone rolled away, and inferred what was not true from what she saw. "The other disciple" saw *from without* the tomb also, but from near the tomb—he was near enough to look inside. He saw the linen cloths lying. These were the cerements or grave wrappings which had been about the body of Jesus. In verses at the end of the nineteenth chapter of this Gospel by John we are told that the body of Jesus was bound in linen cloths wrapped with about a hundred pounds of spices brought by Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, the two men who buried Jesus. Note that the record so far mentions these linen cloths only. These cloths "the other disciple" in a stooping position saw as he looked into the tomb from without. Nothing is said about the effect which this sight had upon him. We are not told how long he stooped looking in. So far, as respects the tomb, we note (1) that it is open, (2) that the linen cloths are there with the spices a hundred pound weight. These would occupy space enough to suggest the size

of a man. The cloths with spices distributed in between the layers would constitute bulk enough to attract and hold the gaze of a looker-in. In what form were they? Let us observe as we proceed.

5. Peter, the disciple of onset, entered the tomb, passing by the one (the disciple of insight) who stood stooping and looking in from without. What did he see? A different word for see is introduced here. Note it carefully. Our Revised translation is "beholdeth." It has the meaning sometimes of to gaze upon inquiringly—to look with eyes wide with intent and great desire to understand. Wonder and amazement may easily be read into it here. What did Peter gaze upon? The linen cloths *and the napkin that was upon His head not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.*

The prominence of this napkin is striking. One-tenth of the whole story is given to it at first mention. It must have some special significance. What can it be? Wait until we know what next occurred. "The other disciple" went into the tomb "and saw and believed." What did he see? Evidently what

Peter was gazing upon—the *linen cloths and the napkin that was upon His head not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself*. What did he believe? What do you think he believed? If you are not clear about how to answer, pause a minute to note that we have now a third Greek word used for see. It is *perceive*. Mary saw (v. 1) the stone and made a wrong inference. “The other disciple” from the outside saw (v. 5) the linen cloths. The same word ( βλέπει ) is used there as in v. 1. Peter beheld ( θεωρει ) the linen cloths and the napkin that was upon His head not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. “The other disciple,” looking upon the same objects upon which Peter was gazing wonderingly and with eager desire to understand the meaning of, *perceived, saw through, understood* ( εἶδε ). A third Greek word for see is here employed.

What now do you think he believed? Was it not that Jesus was alive? Is not this clearly the intent of the author of this story? Surely, “according to the scriptures” the body of Jesus came out of those grave wrappings in a supernatural manner.

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The first seer (Mary) made a wrong inference from what she saw. The last seer, the disciple of insight, made a correct inference from what he saw, as was proved by subsequent experiences.

This conclusion is confirmed by the quietness of mind which the closing verse of this matchless paragraph indicates in contrast to the nervous excitement with which it begins.

Pause a moment to review the scene with special reference to the location in the tomb of the grave cloths and particularly the position and form of the napkin that was about the head. The body had been placed either on the left side or on the right side of the entrance and lengthwise. The head had therefore four possible positions, two near the door, one on one side, the other opposite; and two at the far end of the tomb, one on each side. What would be the result of stooping and looking in from the outside? Would it not be likely that only the cloths (the bulky part) which had enveloped the body would be observed? If the head had been toward the door, no matter on which side, the rolled-up head wrapping would not likely be seen from without. It would be hidden by

the side wall. If the head had been furthest from the door, no matter on which side, the same effect would result. From without, one would be likely to observe only the linen cloths. This would be likely because of both the position and size of the napkin that was about the head. From within, one would see both the linen cloths and the napkin that was about the head. One is profoundly impressed by the detailed accuracy of this account.

Some reader may wish to know that the original word, describing the shape of the "napkin that was about his head," indicates that it was "rolled up." The word is *ἐντετυλιγμένον*, meaning wrapped or twirled. One who has seen an East Indian man's head-gear will have an idea of the shape in mind. Only, instead of the wrapping being about the crown of the head, it would be about the entire head. It would have much the shape of a hollow ball with an opening at one side having the diameter of the neck. Many have the mistaken idea that this "napkin" was folded up by Jesus Himself after He rose from the dead and laid on the shelf where His body had been, very much as a table napkin is folded and laid

beside one's plate. This is sometimes cited as evidence of composure on the part of the risen Saviour, and a proof of leisurely departure from the tomb! Such thought is certainly far from the meaning conveyed to the women and the disciples as they looked upon the place where the Lord lay.

### THE EMPTY TOMB IN THE GOSPEL BY MATTHEW

“His own new tomb, which he had hewn out in a rock,” are the words used (Matthew 27:60) to describe the resting place of the body of Jesus, which Joseph of Arimathæa had provided. Having wrapped the body “in a clean linen cloth,” he laid it in place. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and departed. There is enough difference here to indicate independence of the account in the Gospel by John, but no difference which is so great as to constitute departure from accuracy in either.

Two of several women who observed this burial were Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary.” Other accounts (see Mark and Luke)



make it obvious there were several women with them (see also Matthew 27: 55). These were those who had ministered to Jesus when in Galilee, and had followed Him to Jerusalem. It is altogether natural for us to suppose that together they planned to visit the tomb as early as possible after the Sabbath. What would have been more likely? Let us follow them carefully.

By the authority of Pilate, on request of the chief priests and Pharisees, the tomb had been sealed and a guard had been furnished to prevent robbery. These enemies remembered the statement that Jesus had made about rising from the dead after three days. Strange that the disciples had forgotten? Yes and no. There is the profoundest psychology here. Real life presents the most unexpected contraries. Work it out sometime for yourself. How can we believe this story to be a fabrication? Who would weave out of imagination such a combination of ideas?

The account is as follows (Matthew 28: 1-8):

“Now late on the Sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see



the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead; and lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word."

Keep in mind the presence of the guards as we proceed. It is daybreak on Easter morning. The group of women who had watched the burial approach the tomb. It is sealed. As they draw near, there is an earthquake. All are greatly frightened. Their fear is increased by the sudden opening of the tomb. An angel rolls the stone off to the side and sits upon it. His appearance is like lightning and his raiment as white as snow.

The guards fall to the ground as dead men.

In great excitement Mary Magdalene, her attention being concentrated upon the open door of the tomb, suddenly turns and runs to bring the disciples word. She reported to Peter and John in the words: "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him" (John 20: 2).

The other women of the group hear the angel say: Do not be afraid. I know that you seek Jesus. He is not here. He is risen. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

What is here involved of interest on the question of the resurrection body? Two things especially. First, that the resurrection body left the tomb *before* the stone was rolled away! It was not necessary that the door be opened before the Lord of Life could come forth from the grave. It was impossible to imprison His body of glory. Bindings of head, hand and foot, walls, the seals, guards, a great stone at the door—these were nothing to Him who had been raised in power. The stone was rolled away not to let the Saviour out, but rather to let the women and the disciples in! Why enter? For evidence therein of the fact of resurrection. The angel bade them enter, call-

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ing especial attention to the place where the Lord lay. What was on that stone shelf to observe? The grave wrappings were there, in such form, as we have learned, as to indicate the departure of the body therefrom without disturbing them. They lay there mutely but conclusively testifying to the fact that the body had not been violently removed, but rather of its own volition had leaped through and out of the cerements and through the walls into the fresh air of the new Easter morning. This is the only appropriate manner of action for the Prince of Life in the initial instant of entrance into victory over death.

This interpretation is consistent with an important consideration respecting the guards in relation to the approaching testing time about the preaching of the resurrection. There is thus no period of time, not even the shortest, after the tomb is opened, when witnesses representing both enemies and friends are not present to verify the facts. The guards on the one hand and the women on the other, both witness the opening of the grave. No room is left for controversy about what happened or concerning the contents of the tomb. The body was

there when the tomb was sealed. It was not there when the seal was broken. The linen cloths were there and spoke their own message, confirming the word of the angel.

Certainly there was continuous provision during those stirring, exciting hours against misrepresentation of the truth. It is gratifying to discover that it was this company of devoted ministering women from Galilee who were the first to hear the angel say: "He is risen," and to receive the invitation to verify his statement by inspection of the tomb. Favored Galilee of the Gentiles! To thee in darkness came the light of life. Honored handmaids of the Lord of Glory! We hail you among the blessed, and follow the story of that first Easter with eager interest.

THE EMPTY TOMB IN THE GOSPELS BY MARK  
AND LUKE

Eager desire is present to indicate points of harmony in these two accounts which go a long way toward assurance that the records are not only reliable, but also accurate when each is regarded from its own angle of vision, and its

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particular objective in narration. But limited space requires the greatest brevity. One point only therefore is noted. Both of these accounts refer to the inside of the tomb and particularly to the place where the body had been laid. In Mark the angel specifically directs attention to "the place where they laid him." In the Luke account, we read: "They entered in and found not the body. . . . But Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb, and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths by themselves." The women were "perplexed" and Peter "wondered" at what was seen. Thus all four evangelists recognize the significance of the evidence of resurrection presented *within the tomb*.

*Suggestion:* Study carefully this company of women from Galilee, who are present on the evening of the crucifixion and on the morning of the resurrection. It is confidently believed that as they approached the tomb they saw it opened; as they entered the tomb they witnessed evidence which the grave cloths afforded, that the body had not been violently removed. On the contrary, they were face to face with proof that the body had supernatu-

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rally left the winding sheets intact. Even the head roll remained in its original shape. It had only fallen back in a place by itself when released by the body of Jesus at the instant of its change from a dead body to the resurrection body. Then on their way from the tomb, Jesus himself met them and said, All hail! Again we are constrained to exclaim: Blessed among women, O early rising company from Galilee! Your eyes have seen in succession what no other human eyes have beheld—the new tomb, the closed tomb, the sealed tomb, the tomb opened, the open tomb, within the open tomb. Your testimony concerning it brings comfort to many even in this time remote from your day.

### THE APPEARANCES

#### A Condensed Survey

No particulars are recorded concerning the appearance of our Lord to James and Peter individually. Paul names them both (in I Corinthians, fifteenth) as having been favored as individuals. Paul's own experience is related in the book of the Acts. The

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first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians is suggestive here. We wonder what he, Peter and James talked about during those two weeks spent together at Jerusalem. We may be reasonably sure that they visited the tomb together and that Paul eagerly questioned them both concerning their personal experience with the risen Lord.

### EASTER MORNING

Our Lord appeared to Mary in the garden. Read the account in John, twentieth chapter. It is not necessary to believe, as some assert, that Jesus was dressed in the garb of a gardener. This may have been the case, for in His new mode of existence He was capable not only of appearing and disappearing, but also of appearing in different forms. Mary was weeping. Her tears may have partially blinded her eyes. Moreover, she was not expecting to see the Lord and she was painfully preoccupied. We often have seen intimate friends whom in fact we have not seen. Our eyes have been holden by thought. Mary's action on recognition of her Lord was met by a



word of Jesus which is usually given a strained and unnatural interpretation. Why not make the statement, "Take not hold on me, for I have not yet ascended unto the Father," fit into what follows, and understand it to mean merely this: Do not try to detain Me here, Mary, in the fear that you will never see Me again. I am not immediately ascending to My Father. You will see Me again. Do not remain here longer now, but go unto My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God. This is in perfect harmony with other directions given to the disciples to meet the Lord in Galilee.

#### TOWARDS EASTER EVENING

The story of the two on the way to Emmaus may be allowed here to furnish only two of many most interesting observations. These men, slow of heart to believe the Easter message, although on their own testimony they had heard that He was alive, became men of the burning heart as Jesus Himself opened to them the Scriptures concerning Himself. The body of the resurrection, according to this account,



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was capable of appearing in such fashion as to escape identification for the time being; to make itself recognizable at will, and at will to vanish out of sight!

### THE EVENING OF EASTER

The appearance to the ten (John 20: 19-23) is significant for our present purpose in one respect especially. The record indicates that the doors were securely fastened. The original language is significantly strong here. The disciples feared the Jews, and with special care had made fast the door. This fact adds interest to the statement that Jesus "came and stood in the midst and said: Peace be unto you." He proved to them that the body of the resurrection was the same body in a real sense by showing them His hands and His side. He proved to them that it was different in a real sense by coming into the room in a supernatural manner.

### A WEEK LATER

The doors were bolted a second time. Thomas was present with the ten. Again Jesus

comes into the room in His resurrection body. It is consequently different from His body before His death. Yet it is identifiable as the same, for the wounds are there both in His hands and feet and also in His side.

The wounds of our Lord in His new body, which remain forever to tell the story of redemption procured by the sacrifice of life, suggest the appropriateness here of the following striking, challenging statement of the social significance of the body.

“The Christian doctrine of the resurrection gives the most important emphasis to the social significance of the body. We need to look more closely at the structural meaning of the saint’s glorified body. It is, on the one hand, a spiritual repetition of the body of his temporal probation. Thus comes the accentuation of the distinct person himself. Never is he to lose connection with his own past. Not only by memory, but by his very objective life itself, he is to be reminded that he is the same man who lived that life on earth. Most seriously I urge you to work out the wholesomeness of this thought, that the line of identity is everlastingly sacred, that no man, in all the solemn eternities, can begin all over again.

“Not only so, but this repetition of the earthly body is a perpetual objective insistence

upon the fact that every redeemed man once belonged to that old Adamic race which was broken up by death and because of sin. Thus, the entire social life of the new race will ever suggest the sad history of the old race. No saint can ever make a gesture, or look into the face of another saint, without projecting large hints of the story of a costly redemption. Indeed, the whole objective life of the saints in glory is so planned that it has memorial force, like a great Sacrament." (Curtis, *The Christian Faith*.)

## "DRIVING A STAKE"

Our thesis is that the Easter faith and the Easter message are inseparable. They stand together or they fall together. We believe there is good reason for accepting the Easter message as true, and in consequence exercising the Easter faith.

Let the nature of the message be clearly apprehended. We have had it defined by Professor Harnack who rejects it. It is the empty tomb together with the appearances of Jesus in the body of the resurrection according to the Scriptures.

A certain very successful Bible class teacher

became well known and popular because of his method of "driving a stake" in each lesson. By this is meant that he seized upon a great fact or truth each time and held to it, driving it home in the minds of the members of the class, and relating up to it every other part of the lesson.

Let us follow his example and "drive a stake" in our study of the resurrection. The fact to begin with, to stay with, to go from, to return to, to be always in sight of, and in the light of which to decide, is the fact that the first Christian community was convinced that Jesus Christ was alive from the dead in His resurrection body. The fact of belief in the resurrection by the first generation of Christians (and by resurrection according to the Scriptures is always meant the reunited spirit and body, the body being both the same and different, not a resuscitated body but a resurrected body)—the fact of belief in the resurrection of Jesus by the early Christians is almost the most obtrusive feature of the New Testament. Certainly it is regarded as the most important fact there recorded. It is the cardinal doctrine there

found. The four Gospels reach their climax in the announcement of it and the citation of the evidence of it. The book of the Acts teems with testimony to the same effect. The Epistles are full of resurrection assurances, and the Apocalypse everywhere records the conviction that He who was dead is alive forevermore.

The problem of the rejectors of the message is to account adequately for this fact of belief on the part of the first generation of Christians—those living, say, from 30 to 70 A.D. Charles Reade remarks that “to accept an inadequate explanation of an undeniable fact is credulity in one of its worst forms.” We agree with this principle.

This fact of the belief in the resurrection of Jesus by the first Christian community is the more remarkable because of certain accompanying facts. It is the chief fact of a heap of facts. Consider that the resurrection, as this first group believed it, was not anticipated. Jesus died on the cross, and His disciples had given up hope. Nor was the resurrection believed when first reported. The story appeared to them as an idle tale. “Some doubted” even

after they saw Him. The records give us the impression that the people of those times were quite cautious about accepting as true reports of great happenings, especially of this particular event in question. There were bitter opponents. Those who believed suffered for their belief. Some of them went to death on account of it. All were enthusiastic about it and sought successfully to persuade others to believe it. The company rapidly increased in size. Many believed. Among them were unlikely ones. Priests, the most difficult to persuade, are mentioned as having become members of the Church in large numbers. Then there is Paul. He was not expecting the resurrection. He rejected it. He became convinced of it. He was revolutionized by it. He preached it. He suffered for it and died a martyr to it. His life demonstrated the power of it. He insisted that he and his fellow Apostles were first-class liars or the resurrection was true. Paul was a first generation Christian. He must have had a sufficient basis for his belief. Will the theory of fancy, or the theory of fraud, or the phantom theory, explain it?

### KEEP DRIVING THE STAKE

This pivotal fact of belief that Jesus rose from the dead, on the part of the first generation of Christians is undisputed.

Strauss says: "Only this much need we acknowledge, that the Apostles firmly believed that Jesus had risen." He also says: "Without the faith of the Apostles in the resurrection of Jesus, the Church would never have been born."

Schenkel, a most scholarly rationalist, says: "It is an indisputable fact that on the early morning of the first day of the week following the crucifixion, the grave of Jesus was found empty. It is a second fact that the disciples and other members of the Apostolic Communion were convinced that Jesus was seen after the crucifixion—we will admit this; it is all we have to admit."

Dr. Schmiedel agrees with Strauss and Schenkel. He starts with the one fact of which he is sure, that the followers of Jesus believed that they had seen Him. He even believes that some of the disciples believed they saw and felt



in reality the wounds which Jesus received on the cross.

The testing sentence of Charles Reade is certainly in place here. "To accept an inadequate explanation of an undeniable fact is credulity in one of its worst forms." We repeat:

What is the undeniable fact? It is that the first Christian community—the believers from 30 A.D. to 70 A.D. were convinced that Jesus WAS ALIVE FROM THE DEAD.

Dr. Fairbairn truly says: "We reach the conclusion that on the terms fixed and defined by Modern Criticism, there is, on the supposition that Christ did not rise, no sufficient explanation of the origin of our belief. It is impossible to account for it and save the honesty and rationality of the men."

Dr. James Orr agrees also by saying: "The fulcrum is still wanting by which this fundamental conviction of the earliest Christian community can be lifted from its place."

Professor T. R. Glover, of St. John's College, Cambridge, in an article in the *Constructive Quarterly*, on *Immortality and the Person of Christ*, uses the figure of a tunnel to describe



a certain gap in our knowledge of the Church's history. He calls our attention to the fact that the group of men we meet in the Epistles and the Acts are the same we meet in the Gospels, but they are greatly changed. The train passed through a tunnel. We saw it before it entered and after it left. The same people were in it before and after; but something happened in the tunnel. We must, if we are to remain honest, admit that something very exceptional and very signal happened, for it has changed the history of the world.

### BASES OF REJECTION

We maintain that those who deny the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as reported in the Scriptures, as well as those who in the present time do so, are without justifiable grounds for such denial.

One of the best short discussions of the grounds for accepting the resurrection as a fact is found in the eighteenth chapter of Dr. A. M. Fairbairn's *Studies in the Life of Christ*. He mentions four explanations which have been

offered of belief in the resurrection of Jesus on the part of the first Christian community. To aid the memory they may be called:

The Theory of Fancy,  
The Theory of Fraud,  
The Theory of Phantom,  
The Theory of Fact.

The Theory of Fancy, more commonly known as the Swoon Theory, is that actual death did not occur; that Jesus by some unexplained means appeared to His disciples after He was supposed to have died, and that from this arose the report that He was risen from the dead. This theory was made prominent by the adherence of Schleiermacher. Paulus also was an exponent of it. Strauss, the noted rationalist, to the satisfaction of most people, demolished the theory by his well-known passage from which I quote the following:

“A half-dead man, crawling about, sickly, in need of a physician and a nurse, could never have made upon the disciples the impression of his being the Lord of life, nor changed their mourning into exultation.”

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It is very interesting to observe how the Gospel narratives emphasize the fact of the real death of Jesus. It would almost seem that the attempt to account for the belief by the Swoon theory was anticipated by the guiding Spirit of God when the records were made.

The Theory of Fraud, which is to the effect that the disciples stole away the body by night and gave out the report of the resurrection, has been abandoned as absurd. It is mentioned in the twenty-eighth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew. Variations on this, affording illustrations of the strange extremes to which credulity will go for the purpose of explaining away facts which do not fit theory, are seen in Oscar Holtzman's suggestion that Joseph on reflection removed the body to another tomb, and Kirsopp Lake's idea that the women went to the wrong tomb and a young man who happened to be near said to them: "Over there, not here!" In this connection, we recall that sentence of Carlyle: "O man, great is thy infidel faith!" We recall also the words of Sir Robertson Nicoll: "It is easier to believe in the supernatural than in the impossible."

There remain the two theories—the Phantom Theory and that of Fact. The Phantom Theory in one or another of its forms is the favorite and last resort of rejectors of the fact.

The theory of Keim, who invented the expression “Telegram from heaven” is a variation of the Phantom Theory. It is to the effect that when the disciples believed that they had seen Jesus, they did not really see Him, but only a visionary image. “The visionary image,” says one in reviewing Keim’s theory, “was produced in their souls immediately by God, in order that they might be assured that Jesus was risen.” Holders of this theory of course believe that the body of Jesus remained in the tomb.

Dr. Schmiedel in his article on the Resurrection and Ascension in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* says: “Any attempted explanation presupposes an insight into the subjective experiences that can perhaps never be completely attained; it demands, therefore, the greatest caution. It cannot, however, be left unattempted. . . . For all that has been said in the foregoing paragraphs, the most that can be claimed is that it

## Resurrection Judged Credible? 79

proves the possibility—the probability if you will—of an explanation from subjective visions.”

The difficulties manifestly attending such an explanation are great. The explanation presents greater difficulties than it removes. They have led the rejectors of the fact of the resurrection to attempt generally no explanation at all, but to take refuge in the general assumption of the impossibility of the supernatural.



## Chapter V: The Resurrection and the Power of God

*On our present view, the energy of the constitution of the ether is incredibly and portentously great, every cubic millimeter of space possessing what, if it were matter, would be a mass of a thousand tons and an energy equivalent to the output of a million horsepower station for forty million years.*

—SIR OLIVER LODGE.

*The fifth part of an American five-cent piece, if we could entirely disassociate it in one second, would give an energy equal to six milliards, eight hundred million horsepower, the energy of a moving body being equal to half the product of its mass by the square of its velocity.*

—GUSTAV LE BON.



## Chapter V: The Resurrection and the Power of God

The resurrection of Jesus is the New Testament unit of power. Back of the New Testament are the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament), with their tremendous emphasis on the power of God. He is the Almighty Creator. He never grows weary. For Him nothing is impossible. In the very initial stage of the history of the chosen people, the father of the race was asked, "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?" Interesting enough, the occasion was one when life from the dead was in question.

The mighty hand of God was revealed in the overthrow of Pharaoh, and the deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt. In song the Redeemer from bondage was praised thus:

"Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the  
gods?

Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness,  
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

In the realm of experience, it may be said that the Exodus was the Old Testament unit of God's power, or perhaps better, the measure of God's power. It is frequently referred to as an indication of what He could do.

Perhaps the book of Job magnifies God's power as much as any other part of the Old Testament. Here, as in other portions, observation of the forces of nature led to recognition of the omnipotence of the Creator and Preserver of the universe. A typical expression of this is found in Job, twenty-sixth chapter, where after a graphic description of the power of God as displayed in nature, the writer says:

“Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways:  
And how small a whisper do we hear of him!  
But the thunder of his mighty power who can  
understand?”

The Psalms are full of instruction about the person and nature of God. DeWitt, in the Introduction to *A New Translation of the Psalms*, asserts that they are fuller of instruction about God than even the New Testament, and that the New Testament assumes this pre-

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vious revelation as not needing to be repeated.  
Here is one selection,

“God hath spoken once,  
Twice have I heard this,  
That power belongeth unto God.”  
(Psalm 62: 11.)

The prophets are unsurpassed in the consideration which they give to the power of God. For example, the great fortieth chapter of Isaiah, having comfort as its objective, dwells on the wisdom, tenderness and power of God. It says, in part: “Jehovah will come as a mighty one. Who hath meted out heaven with the span? . . . and weighed the mountains in scales? Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket . . . behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” Referring to the stars of heaven, he says, “Lift up your eyes on high, and see who created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking.”

Referring to the resurrection, our Lord said to the Sadducees, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” Certainly

they did not know their Scriptures about God's power or they would not have questioned His ability to raise the dead. They evidently also had little personal experience of God's power, else they would have been more receptive of His Son and His message. Who but Sadducees will raise a question about the God of the Bible being equal to the problem of Easter?

The Apostle Paul uses four different words in one verse to indicate the activity and accomplishment of God Almighty, and all of them with respect to Easter. The verse is the nineteenth of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Three expressions are found in the prayer of which this verse is a part. They are: "His calling," "his inheritance," "his power." This great Christian and leader of men wishes for his friends and all Christian believers that they may have the eyes of their heart opened to know "what is the exceeding greatness of his *power* [dynamite] to us-ward who believe, according to that *working* \* [energy] of the *strength* of his *might* which he wrought [exercised] in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand." No

\* Thayer says that this word is in the New Testament used only of superhuman power.

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portion of the Bible of equal length has such a heaping together of words for power. Let us never forget it. God is able. He giveth it a body.

The reader is earnestly advised to pursue the study of the verses in Ephesians following the one quoted above. Ignore the division of chapters, and note how the power of God manifested in the resurrection of Christ is followed by an exhibition of that same power in the case of believers who are referred to in the second chapter. The parallel is striking. Christ was raised and exalted to the right hand of God in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20). Believers are made alive together with Christ and raised up with Him and made to sit with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:5, 6). Resurrection and ascension are both here for both Christ and believers. They rise from the dead and go with Him into the heavenlies. The entire programme of redemption, as here, is continually in Paul's mind. He looks forward to the ages to come (2:7) and lives in the presence of the revelation of the exceeding riches to come, of God's grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The words of Dr. David Cairns, quoted in the foreword, may fittingly be used again as we bring this brief study to a close. "In belief in the resurrection is the spring of that new life of faith of which to-day the Church stands in so much need." Shall we not seek this spring whose refreshment not only we ourselves personally so sorely need, but also the multitudes who spend their earnings for that which satisfies not?

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Our Saviour's Spirit beforehand moved the prophet to call thus like an auctioneer. Were ever such valuable holdings thus offered? In the fulness of time in a house of mourning He Himself said: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live."

Christmas, Good Friday, Easter. The Incarnation, The Atonement, The Resurrection. The last of these is greatest in the sense that once the message of Easter obtains, the others follow. And more, for Easter is not the last

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of this series. Resurrection is followed by Ascension, Intercession, Procession (the gift of the Holy Spirit), Revelation, Manifestation, Restoration of all things.

Nor is Christmas the first in this indissoluble order. Jesus Christ had a past. God promised the Good News afore through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh, who was demonstrated to be the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead (Romans, first chapter).

We must go even further back, for this Son, who was promised by prophets, is He in whom were created all things in the heavens and upon the earth. He was in the beginning with God, and being the whole beaming image of God's glory, and the very expression of God's substance, He was God. He is the Alpha and the Omega with all the letters between. He is the first and the last, only begotten Son of God, and Ultimate Man.

The Resurrection Chapter of the Bible is First Corinthians, fifteenth. From the beginning, middle and end of it the words below are



selected as fittingly concluding this Easter message.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures. . . . But now hath Christ been raised from the dead. . . . For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. . . . Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

THE END

















